



Ministry  
of Justice

**Sir Nic Dakin MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Justice

Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair  
Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
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29 October 2024

Dear Jenny,

### **SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Thank you for your letter to Lord Timpson of 14 October, on behalf of the Equality and Social Justice Committee, regarding the provision for speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system. I am responding as the minister responsible for youth justice.

I recognise the importance of provision for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in ensuring that all children and young people are able to engage with the youth justice system. Meeting these needs falls under healthcare provision and, as health is a devolved matter, arrangements in England and Wales are not identical. I would expect children and young people in Wales to receive equivalent provision as those in England – where most Youth Offending Teams either have in-house, or work closely with, speech and language therapists who assess and provide interventions for children who come into contact with the justice system.

Through Turnaround, a youth early intervention programme led by the Ministry of Justice, YOTs have supported thousands of children and their families. The programme is on track to support over 17,000 children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system. I am pleased to hear that the programme has been able to help support put in place the speech and language services I know can be vital to helping divert children away from offending.

Unfortunately, I am not able to commit or comment on the programme's continued funding at this point. The Chancellor's forthcoming Budget will set future budgets for all Government departments. This will determine funding for early intervention support for children on the cusp of the justice system. The Ministry of Justice will share further detail regarding funding with the Welsh Government and Welsh YOTs as soon as possible.

There are formal governance structures in place to ensure engagement of Welsh and UK Government officials, as well as ongoing communication as a matter of routine. I shall shortly meet Jane Hutt MS and I expect she and I will meet regularly to discuss these vital issues.

**SIR NIC DAKIN MP**